

124.
A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the much lamented

D E A T H

Of the R E V E R E N D

Mr. Thomas Cole,

Who departed this Life

AUGUST the 5th, 1742.

Preached at GLOCESTER, *August 22.*

*And Published with some Additions at the
People's Request.*

By THOMAS HALL. K

L O N D O N:

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23

W. Musgrave!



THOMAS HALL

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ACTS XX. 38.

*Sorrowing most of all for the Words which he spake,
that they should see his Face no more.—*

A Very mournful Providence having brought this numerous Assembly together, it would be highly incongruous not to have a *Text* suitable to the Occasion. When I was surprized into this Service, my Thoughts were quickly led to this Passage, which relates to the sorrowful Case of the *Elders of the Church at Ephesus*, and some *Christian Brethren*, of whom *Paul* was taking his last Farewel at *Miletus*.

He had apprized them of his approaching Sufferings, which would prevent his labouring any more among them, and had assured them, *ver. 25.* that they should *see his Face no more*. Upon this, he first applied himself to the *Brethren* in a Way of serious *Advice* and *Caution*, and then addressed himself to the *Lord* by humble *Prayer* and *Supplication*.—Hence we may note, that *Preaching*, and all Religious Exhortations, are to be sanctified by *Prayer*. *Paul* may *plant*, and *Apollos* may *water*; but all the *Increase* must come from *GOD*.—The *Apostle* therefore having concluded his Discourse to the People, *kneeled down*, and in the most humble Posture *prayed with them all*, *ver. 36.*—And then follows the Account of the

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People's

People's Deportment under these melancholy Circumstances; *They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's Neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the Words which he spake, that they should see his Face no more.*

And here we may take Notice, what wonderful Effects Grace produces. It *sanctifies* the Affections, and *strengthens* them.—These *Christians* mourned upon spiritual Accounts: They esteemed *Paul* very highly, and loved him greatly, *for his Work's Sake*^b. Plain Indications, that their Affections were *sanctified*! For to such Evangelical Dispositions Man's apostate Nature is utterly repugnant. — Grace also *strengthens* the Affections. The purest Love is the most firm and constant. Grace unites the Hearts of *Christian Brethren*, and knits the Affections of godly *Ministers* and *People* one to another, in the most endeared Manner: It begets the most tender Respects between them, and makes it hard parting.

Thus it was with the *Christians* at *Miletus*: When *Paul* was leaving them, they *wept*; and *wept sore*; they were deeply affected. He had been the Instrument of much Good to them; and Grace wrought in them a grateful Sense of his kind Offices. This they expressed, by the Tenderness of their passionate *Salutes*, when they *fell on his Neck, and kissed him*; and by the Bitterness of their *Sorrow*, when they heard they must *lose him*. He had said several Things, which moved them, and went near their Hearts; but of all others *this* wounded the deepest. Thus the *Text* tells us, *They sorrowed most of all for the Words which he spake, that they should see his Face no more.*

This was a very great *Mourning*, occasioned, tho' not by a *Funeral*, yet by a solemn *Farewel*, which came as near it as possible. It was their *last Interview* with the *Apostle*; and they knew it to be so. The *Holy Ghost* having certified this to *Paul*, he acquainted the *Christians* with it; and they believed it. *This* made them *weep* and *mourn*.

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If their *Parting* had been for a short Space, or for a Time only, the Prospect of seeing him again, and the Hope of hereafter enjoying his Ministry among them again, would have very much *alleviated their Sorrow*. But to know, *that they should see his Face*, and hear his Voice, *no more*, This! This! was the Thing that pierced them to the Heart, and gave the strongest Accent to their universal Lamentation. *They ALL wept*: Not one, it seems, in all the Company could forbear; but every one lamented his own, and the common Loss of his Fellow-Christians in the Country round.

Now that very Consideration, which the *Text* specifies, as the justifiable *Ground* of their *Sorrow*, does constantly attend a *Minister's Death*. The People are then at once deprived of all farther Enjoyment of his Ministry, and must *see his Face no more*.

These Words therefore naturally yield us this Observation, *viz.*

The *Death of Gospel-Ministers* is, to the *Saints* especially, just Matter of great Concern and Lamentation.

There is indeed a vast Difference betwixt the *Ordinary Ministers* of the Gospel, and the *Extraordinary*; between the *Pastors* of Churches, and an inspired *Apostle*. And it is not to be expected, that in *ordinary Cases*, upon the Removal of a *Pastor*, how excellent or eminent soever he was, the *People* should *mourn*, as the *Elders* and *Christians* at *Miletus* did, upon that *extraordinary* Occasion. Yet since *faithful Ministers* now stand in a special *Relation* to the same King and Head of the Church, as the *Apostle* himself did; since they bear the same general *Character* with him, being *the Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of GOD*; and since their *Work* is of the same spiritual and holy Nature, carried on in a

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Subserviency to the same great Design of promoting the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls, as that of the *Apostle* was; there must therefore be, in some Proportion, the like justifiable *Reason for Lamentation* at the *Loss of these*, as there was at the *Apostle's Departure*.—Besides, at the *Death of Ministers* an absolute *Period* is put to their Labours in the Gospel. And this Consideration adds one weighty Circumstance to these *Occasions for Mourning*, which theirs at *Miletus* had not. For tho' the *Apostle* was removed from those Parts, and *they* were to see his Face no more, yet his Days were prolonged, and his uncommon Labours continued for some considerable Time, to the Furtherance of the Gospel in many Places, and particularly, in the Church at *Ephesus*; as appears from the *Epistle* he afterwards wrote to them, even when he was a *Prisoner at Rome*. And if a *faithful Minister's Removal*, tho' it be but from one Part of *Christ's Vineyard* to another, be grievous to the *Christians* from whom he is taken, surely then his *Death* must be much more afflicting.

That my Discourse may be suitably managed, I shall, through Divine Assistance, attempt Three Things. I shall

I. Assign some *Reasons*, why the *Death of Gospel-Ministers* in general is to be accounted *Matter of Lamentation*.

II. Point out some *special Circumstances*, which, when they occur, are a *great Aggravation* of the *Loss* of such *Ministers*.

And as it must be expected, that the Mention of these Things will afresh open the Springs, and raise the Tide of your Sorrow; I shall therefore in the *Application*,

III. At-

III. Attempt to turn your *Sorrow* into its *proper Channel*, by shewing how it should be *regulated* and *improved*; and

Then conclude with a few Hints for your *Support* and *Consolation*.

I. I shall assign some *Reasons*, why the *Death* of *Gospel-Ministers* in general is to be accounted *Matter of Lamentation*.

Such Dispensations of Providence are generally attended with some awful Intimations, however Persons of a light carnal Spirit may suffer them to pass neglected. There are many, especially in this unconcerned, if not thoughtless, Generation, that are ready to ask, Who are *these Ministers*? What are they? that *their Death* should be *so much lamented*?—Ah! 'tis true, the World generally look upon them with Contempt and Scorn. Hence the *most godly Ministers* have been sometimes pointed and hooted at, as a strange Sort of Men, unworthy of Liberty, yea, of Life itself. Profligate Sinners are often crying out, *Away with such Fellows*; *it is not fit they should live*^d. But 'tis their Comfort to think, that *GOD is in the Wood, as well as the Devil**.—Thus they that were the Blessings of the Age, have been represented and treated, as if they had been the Burthen of the Earth, and the Plague of their Generation.

But all Good Men, whose Judgments are regulated by the Word of GOD, have different Sentiments of them. They know them to be *the Salt of the Earth*, and *the Lights of the World*^e, by whom
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^d Acts xxii. 22.

* This I am informed was the Reply, which *Mr. Cole* lately made, when he was told, that some Enemies of his Religion and Zeal intended to way-lay him in his Passage through a Wood.

^e Mat. v. 13, 14.

the Light and Savour of the *Knowledge of Christ* is diffused and spread. They cannot therefore but lament the *Loss of them* for the Reasons now to be assigned.

1. Their *Death* has a melancholy Prospect, with respect to several important Things.

1. With regard to the *Glory of the Redeemer* in the Advancement of his Kingdom.

Here we must observe, that tho' the *Essential Glory* of *Christ* can never be liable to any Diminution or Alteration, yet his *Declarative Glory* in the World may. *This* has its different Times and Seasons; in some of which it shines forth with Clearness and Brightness, but at other Times it is obscured and clouded: And this in Proportion, as an *Addition* is made, or not made, to the Subjects of his Kingdom. The *Increase* of their Number must ever be esteemed an Accession to *his Glory*. All that are made *a willing People in the Day of his Power*, are undeniably the Trophies of his victorious Grace. Their Deliverance out of the Kingdom of Darkness, plainly declares the high Praises of Him that has saved them. And being subdued and heartily won over to his Interest, they become chearfully active in his Service; aiming to give unto *Him*, as well as to the *Father*, and the *Spirit*, the *Glory* that is *due unto his Name*. They honour Him upon Account of the infinite *Dignity of his Person*, as He is the *Eternal Son* of the *Eternal Father*; and equal with him in Power and Glory. They honour Him in the whole of his *Mediatorial Character*, in all the *Offices* which he executes, as the Saviour of the Church, and the Redeemer of his People. They honour Him as the Great *High-Priest over the House of GOD*, by trusting in the Perfection of *his Righteousness*, in the Merit of *his Sacrifice*, and the Power of *his Intercession*, for their Acceptance with God, both as to their Persons, and all their holy Duties. They honour

honour Him as the anointed *Prophet of the Church*, by sitting at his Feet, waiting for the Instructions of *his Word*, and the Revelation of *his Spirit*; resolving not to receive any Thing as an Article of their Faith, or as the Rule of their Worship, but what they apprehend he has taught them; and carefully *observing all Things whatsoever he has commanded* ^f. They honour Him also, by endeavouring to submit in every Particular to his Authority, Government, and Rule; acknowledging Him to be the sole *King of the Church*, the immense Governour, and Lord of All.

Thus the *Increase of Believers* immediately tends to the *Redeemer's Glory*; and the faithful Labours of his *Ministers* are the proper Means of that Increase. *Their Death* then gives Reason to fear, lest the Work of Conversion should be at a Stand, especially in the Places from which they are taken. And should that be the Case, Men will with-hold from *Christ* that Trust and Dependance which are his Due; and deny Him that Tribute of Praise and Adoration, those Revenues of Faith, Love, and new Obedience, which are the Delight of his Soul; the suitable and dutiful Returns, of which he is infinitely worthy.

The Saints cannot but *mourn* then, at the *Death of faithful Ministers*. And that which opens the Fountain of their Tears, is their tender Regard to their *Saviour's Glory*. For as *Christ* has a constant effectual *Sympathy* with his People, in all their Concerns, Distresses, and Enlargements; so they have a dutiful *Sympathy* with Him, in all the Concerns of his Glory. They rejoice in the Prosperity of his Kingdom, and mourn under every Event, that threatens them with a Disappointment, as to their pleasing Hopes of its speedy Enlargement.

Blessed are the *Souls* in this Assembly, whose *Mourning* arises from their *Sympathy with Christ*, and from an holy Concern for *his Honour*; produced in them by the real Experience of his renewing Grace, of

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his pardoning Mercy, and distinguishing Love: *For such shall be comforted*^s.

Again, *The Death of Ministers* gives a melancholy Prospect,

2. With regard to the *Salvation and Happiness of the Souls of many*:

Next to the *Honour of GOD*, there is not any Thing that can be of greater Importance, than the *Salvation of the Soul*. In taking an Estimate therefore of the Good or Evil of any Event, we are to consider the Reference it has to our *Souls*; how *their Welfare* is likely to be promoted, or *their Hurt* occasioned thereby.

This shews the *Death of faithful Ministers* to be a very just *Cause of Grief*. For *their Office* bears a special *Relation* to the spiritual Interests and eternal Concerns of the *Soul*. *Ministers* are raised up, and sent forth, to open *Men's Eyes*, to turn them from *Darkness to Light*, and from the *Power of Satan* unto *GODⁿ*; that Persons, being renewed and pardoned, may be delivered from the distracting Horrors and endless Torments of Hell, be fitted for the everlasting Joys of Heaven, and led to the Blessedness of eternal Life. And with this View they are willing to *spend and be spent*, in the Service of *Christ*, and his *Gospel*. They are really Well-wishers, and Instruments of Blessings, to the *Souls* of Men.

Now if the *Loss* of a kind *Friend*, whose Advice and Assistance was useful in *Trade*; if the *Loss* of a skilful *Physician*, or an able *Lawyer*, whose Directions and Care are wanted for our Benefit, as to *Body*, or *Estate*; if the *Loss* of these is found to be a real Affliction and Damage: Surely then the *Loss* of an able and faithful *Gospel-Minister*, who was affectionately concerned for the Good of *our Souls*, must be very grievous; because the Concerns of *our Souls* are of infinitely

infinitely greater Importance, than either the Health of the *Body*, or the best Security of *earthly Possessions*.

And you of this Congregation can tell, what an *able Minister*, and what a *faithful Friend to Souls*, you are now deprived of, by the *Death* of the late worthy and dear *Mr. Cole*. You know, what have been the many solemn Warnings, what the weighty and divine Instructions, what the pressing Exhortations, the serious Advices and Admonitions, by which he discovered the Sincerity of his Aim at the spiritual Good and eternal Welfare of your *Souls*.—And no wonder, that you are *sorrowing*, because you shall *see his Face*, and hear his Voice, *no more*.—You cannot but *mourn*; and all that knew him think, there is *just Occasion* for it; especially since none upon Earth can say, what may be the dreadful Consequence of such an awful Dispensation.

Ministers of the Gospel are the *Embassadors of Christ*: To them is committed the *Word of Reconciliation*ⁱ, that by the *Blood of the Cross* Sinners may be brought into a State of *Peace with GOD*. Their *Death* then carries with it a very threatening Aspect; like that of *Princes* calling Home their *Embassadors*, when all *Treaties of Peace* are at an End, and *War* ready to be proclaimed.

And who knows with what furious Rebukes GOD may now come forth? against those in particular, that have slighted the most salutary Message that could be sent them, and long withstood the most pressing Invitations? Does not GOD's putting out the *Lights*, look as if the *Candlestick* itself was quickly to be removed? By the *Death of Ministers*, are not the *Places* where they lived threatened with a *Departing Gospel*? And if the *Gospel* should be removed, what will become of the *Souls of Men*? *Where there is no Vision*, are we not assured, that *the People perish*^k? Oh! the Numbers that will then certainly be *destroyed for Lack of Knowledge*^l! How grieving the Thought,

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ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.^k Prov. xxix. 18.^l Hos. iv. 6.

to an enlightened Mind ! to a graciously tender, and compassionate Heart !

If any not duly sensible of the Misery or Danger of such a State of Things, should vainly presume, that tho' *one Minister* be taken away, *another* may be sent. To this I would reply, 'Tis true indeed, when a *Pilot* dies, another may quickly be put in his Place ; but suppose he that succeeds, should not sufficiently understand his *Compass*, or should be unacquainted with the *Rocks*, or *Sands*, that lie upon the Coast, might not this prove fatal to the *Ship*, and threaten Destruction to all the Passengers ? There are, no doubt, *Ministers* to be had ; but the Difficulty is, and I believe the most of you think it so, to find one *like-minded* with him that is gone, *who shall naturally care for the State of your Souls* ^m.—Such therefore in this Assembly, as have any serious Thoughtfulness about the *Future State*, will mourn. An holy Solicitude for the present and eternal *Welfare* of their own and others *Souls*, cannot but bring the Tears into their Eyes upon this Occasion.

Further, The *Death of Ministers* has a melancholy Prospect,

3. With regard to the *flourishing State of the Churches*.

What is there upon Earth, next to a Communion with God in his own Soul, that can be more delightful to a Believer, than to see the *Churches of Christ* in a prosperous Condition, *increasing with all the Increase of GOD* ⁿ ? What Matter of Joy is it to him, to behold, that *as they have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so they walk in Him* ^o ? *abiding in the Doctrine of Christ* ^p, and being careful to maintain good Works ^q, which GOD hath before ordained that they should walk in them ^r.

For

^m Phil. ii. 20.
^p 2 John ver. 9.

ⁿ Col. ii. 19.
^q Tit. iii. 8.

^o Col. ii. 6.
^r Eph. ii. 10.

For the promoting and maintaining such an happy State of Things as this, in a Subserviency to his own Glory, *Christ* has given *Pastors and Teachers*, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of *Christ*, that they may grow up into Him in all Things^s.—And if the Bestowment of such Officers upon any of the *Churches* is to be esteemed as a *Token for Good*, as a Step to farther Mercy, and an Earnest of it; what Construction then can be put upon their *Removal*, but that it looks like a threatening Sign of some approaching Evil? Is not *their Death* generally attended with a very gloomy Appearance?

May not the Detriment, which *Churches* are likely to suffer by the *Decease* of godly Ministers, be easily inferred from the *Characters* they bear, and the *Work* assigned them in the Word of God?

When a wise *Master-Builder* is called off, will not a Stop be put, for the present at least, to the Building and Work of *GOD's spiritual Temple*? And every particular *Church* is that *Temple*^t.—When they that were appointed to plant, and to water, are dismissed from any farther Service, How can it be expected, that the *Church* in which they laboured, should during its destitute Condition increase, either as to the Number of its Members, or the Growth of its Graces?—Nay, when a *Flock* is left without a *Shepherd*, are not the *Sheep* exceeding prone to wander? Or when their *Guide* is taken from them, may not a *People* quickly miss their Way?

In Scripture Language, *Churches* are compared to a *City*, and *Ministers* are the *Watchmen* set upon its Walls. To their Office it belongs, to observe the Motions of the Enemy, and give Notice of any approaching Danger. And they that are faithful, will never hold their Peace; but while they live, they will Night and Day be wrestling with *GOD* in Prayer; and from Sabbath to Sabbath, in Season and out of Season, will they be giving the People all useful Admonitions

^s Eph. iv. 11, 12, 15.

^t 2 Cor. vi. 16.

monitions and necessary *Warnings*. Thus they are the Means of *preserving a Church*, helping it to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace* ^u.

Ministers are also set for the *Publication* and *Defence* of the *Gospel*, and for the *Administration* of all the *Ordinances* of Divine Appointment. And when through the faithful Discharge of their Office, *Gospel-Truths* are cleared up and vindicated, and *Gospel-Ordinances* administered in their Purity and Power, there is then Reason to hope, that with the Blessing of the Lord *Churches* may become eminent for Faith, Holiness, and Love. But when *Ministers* are laid aside by *Death*, and totally put to Silence, is not the *flourishing State* of the *Churches* apparently threatened, and their Establishment and Safety greatly endangered?

Can any be such Strangers to the Affairs of the *Churches* in the present Day, as not to know, that in several Places the *Death of Godly Ministers* has been followed with many dreadful Consequences, which their Instruction, Watchfulness, and Prayers had been long the Means of preventing? But upon *their Decease*, What Defection from the *Truth*? What Remissness and Coldness as to spiritual and eternal Things? What shameful Broils, and furious Contentions? What Impurities, or Formality, in *Worship*? What Neglect of *Discipline* in the *Church*, and what Looseness in *Conversation*, have soon sprung up, or crept in among a People, once renowned for their Faith, Stedfastness, and Zeal?

Thus have numerous and once flourishing Assemblies, that were not long before in great Reputation for their Strictness in Religion, their Tenderness and Self-Denial, been afterwards corrupted and defiled, rent and torn, if not utterly dispersed and scattered.

And that, which through their own Want of Watchfulness eventually proved the first unhappy Occasion of such sad Declensions and fore Divisions,

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^u Eph. iv. 3.

was a like melancholy Providence with that which you are under. And after all the signal Advantages, which for Years past you have richly enjoyed, when we consider the Nature of Unbelief, the Power of indwelling Sin, the subtle Devices and artful Endeavours of the Hellish Foe, with the Influence and Snares of the present World, we cannot but tremble for you; knowing, that whatever be your Attainments in Grace, you are yet far from being out of Danger. And that this is the serious and affecting Apprehension you have of your own Case, may be gathered, I think, from your present Behaviour. For if it were not so, what could be the Cause of the *bitter Lamentation* and *general Mourning*, which upon the present awful Event are heard and seen among you? May you be quickened to the most resolute Watchfulness, and graciously preserved from all such threatening and destructive Evils!

Once more, The *Death of Ministers* has a melancholy Prospect,

4. With regard even to the *Prosperity of the Nation itself*.

To make this evident, we are to remember, that the *faithful Ministers of Christ* are all *Men of GOD*, the Servants and Favourites of Heaven. They are Men, who by *fervent Prayer* diligently put the *Promises* in suit; pleading, that the *Lord* would *give us the former and the latter Rain* ^w; that *neither Summer nor Winter, Seed-time nor Harvest, may fail* ^x. They pray, that there may be *Plenty, and Peace in our Borders* ^y; that our *Tranquillity* may be *lengthened out* ^z. They make *Supplication for all Men; for the King, and all in Authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty* ^a. They are importunate with God, as well as Man, that an uni-
versal

^w Deut. xi. 14. ^x Gen. viii. 22. ^y Psal. cxlvii. 14.
^z Dan. iv. 27. ^a 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

versal and speedy *Reformation* may be wrought in the Land; that we may become *an holy Nation*, and thus be *a People saved of the Lord*. This they know to be their Duty, and they dare not omit it.

And since we are assured, that *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*^b, we may warrantably conclude, that the *Prayers* of these *Men of GOD* shall ever, through the *Mediation of Christ*, find a gracious Acceptance, and be remarkably answered, and crowned with Success, when the Lord shall see fit.—*Their Prayers* therefore may from hence be very fitly called *a Prophet's Reward*^c. For it is thus, that a Prophet rewards his kind Friends, and compassionate Benefactors: He *prays for them*. As the Lord said to *Abimelech, King of Gerar*, concerning *Abraham*^d; *The Man is a Prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live*.—And if indeed the *Kings of the Earth*, if Ministers of State, and Princes, rightly understood Things, they would lay more Strefs upon the *Prayers of Christ's faithful Ministers*, than generally now they do.

Queen *Mary*, tho' a persecuting *Papist*, and full of Prejudices, yet could not stifle or conceal the secret Reverence, which her Conscience had for that Man of GOD *Mr. Knox*, a noted *Protestant Minister* of those Times in the *Kirk of Scotland*. So terrible were the Apprehensions, which the *Queen* had of the Success of his *Supplications*, that she declared, She feared *John Knox's Prayers*, more than she did an Army of Ten Thousand Men.

And in all Cases, whether of a Spiritual, or Temporal Nature, if the *Prayers* of any Men can have *Power with GOD*, none are more likely than theirs, to prevail, that deserved and impending *Judgments* may be averted, and that desirable and needful *Blessings* may be granted.

For this, among other Reasons, the Character that was given of those renowned *Prophets, Elijah* and

^b Jam. v. 16.

^c Mat. x. 41.

^d Gen. xx. 7.

and his *Successor*, may in a proportionable Measure be applied to *Christ's faithful Ministers* in every Age. For tho' they be *subject* to many *Weaknesses* and *Passions*, as those *Prophets* themselves also were^e, yet are they *the Chariots of Israel, and the Horsemen thereof*^f. They are a considerable Part of the Nation's best Guard, and greatly contribute to its Defence. The good Example, the Instructions and Reproofs, which they give the People, are often, through the Blessing of the Lord, the Means of restraining Men from Sin; and thus, of preventing the Increase of the Number of our Provocations. And, for the Sake of our great *Immanuel*, in Answer to the humble Cries which they are daily sending up to the Majesty of Heaven, either Pardon is granted, or the Divine Forbearance is continued, and the Patience of God long exercised.

How mean or obscure soever then their *Names* may be, tho' they are generally *Persons* of no Note, and tho' their *Prayers* may be of little or no Value with the Publick, or the Government under which they live; yet oftentimes these *Servants of the Lord*, by Means of their *Instructions*, and through their *Supplications* and *Power with GOD*, are really and effectually, tho' in a more remote and secret Manner, the *Instruments* of saving the Land from Ruin. Their *Influence* indeed is small upon *Earth*; but great is their *Interest* at the *Throne of Grace*, and in the *Court of Heaven*.

If the Matter therefore be seriously considered, *their Death* will appear to be *just Cause for Lamentation*.

I shall now pass on,

II. To point out some *special Circumstances*, which, when they occur, are a great *Aggravation* of the *Loss* of such *Ministers*.

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Those

^e Jam. v. 17.

^f 2 Kings xiii. 14.

Those I shall mention, will be included under the following *Heads*.—And surely they are *Circumstances* that must greatly aggravate the *Loss* of such,

1. When they that are removed, were favoured with *distinguished Qualifications* for their Work, and with *remarkable Success* therein.

When they eminently answered the *Character* they bore, as *the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of GOD*^s:—When they were richly furnished with the *Unction of the Holy One*^h, which, tho' it does not supersede, yet it surmounts, the Teaching of Men, and in Comparison therewith all Human Learning is as Nothing:—When they were blest with uncommon *Endowments* and *Abilities* for their Work; and *approved themselves* to be able *Ministers of the New Testament, not of the Letter, but of the Spirit*ⁱ; *Workmen, that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*^k:—When they were *faithful* also, as Paul was, *not shunning to declare the whole Counsel of GOD*^l; but were careful to *preach the Preaching which he bid them*^m; *not keeping any Thing back*ⁿ, either as to *Doctrine* or *Reproof*, that was necessary to be spoken, or likely to be of Service; and would never be discouraged from *seeking to please the Lord*, for Fear of *offending Man*^o:—Surely the *Death* of such *Ministers* is greatly to be lamented.

When they were likewise diligent in their *Studies*; industrious, frequent, and fervent in their *Preaching*; being indefatigable in their Work, incessant in their Labours, and daily upon the Stretch in the Service of GOD for the Good of Souls:—When moreover, they were of an humble, tender Spirit; of a sympathizing, condescending, and affectionate Temper:—When

^s 1 Cor. iv. 1. ^h 1 John ii. 20. ⁱ 2 Cor. iii. 6.
^k 2 Tim. ii. 15. ^l Acts xx. 27. ^m Jonah iii. 2. ⁿ Acts
xx. 20. ^o Gal. i. 10.

—When they were exemplary in their Self-Denial, Prudence, and Discretion; *not seeking their own, but the Things which are Jesus Christ's* ^P: — When they knew how to rule their own House, and to take Care of the Church of GOD ^q; wisely conducting their own Affairs, and giving proper Advice to others: — When they were truly of a peaceable and loving Disposition, while at the same Time they were *valiant for the Truth* ^r, and *zealous* for the pure Observation of Divine Institutions:---When by such Circumstances as these *their Life* was *endeared*, by the Remembrance thereof *their Death* will be greatly *imbittered*.

Especially, when withal they were signally *crowned with Success*, and made the happy *Instruments* of *converting Sinners from the Errors of their Way* ^s:---When their *Ministry* was adapted, and made useful to *win Souls to Christ*, to enlighten the Minds of Men, to purify their Hearts, and reform their Lives: When it was suited, and rendered effectual, to confirm the *Feeble*, and satisfy the *Doubting*, to comfort the *Distressed*, relieve the *Tempted*, and answer all the Ends of their *holy Calling*:---In every such Case, in Proportion to the high Degree that any *Ministers* were conspicuous and *noted* for their excelling *Capacities*, their shining *Qualifications*, and eminent *Usefulness* in *Life*, the greater *Affliction* and *Loss* will religious Persons esteem, and find, *their Death* to be.

How far the great Things I have now mentioned, did enter into the *Character* of your *Deceased Pastor*, is what I need not say to *you*, or any that were well acquainted with him.---As to *you* of this Church and Congregation, who for *above Twenty Years* had the Privilege of his *Ministry*, and of a peculiar Intimacy with him, your serious and raised Opinion of *his Attainments*, your Sense of the Greatness of *your Loss* through *his Departure*, have been plainly declared
C 2 by

^P Phil. ii. 21.

^q 1 Tim. ii. 5.

^r Jer. ix. 3.

^s Jam. v. 20.

by the *many Tears* you have shed upon this doleful Occasion. And certainly the best and highest *Encomium* of a *departed Minister* is, that which is given, not in a fulsome *Panegyrick*, but by the bitter *Cries* and general *Lamentation* of the Godly, when they know *that they shall see his Face no more*.

Another *Circumstance*, which, when it happens, does further *aggravate the Death of Ministers*, is,

2. Their being removed *at a Time*, when their *Opportunities for Service* were *increasing*.

As the *Seasonableness* of a *Mercy* is often a very great Addition to it; so the *Time* of an *Affliction* may give it the greater Weight. That *Ministers* should be *called off* from their Work, *at a Time*, when great *Numbers* are *thirsting* and longing after the *Word*, with an *Eagerness* that in these Days is not common: ---That they should be *taken away*, when the Providence of God had just *opened*, it may be, a *wider Door* for their Usefulness, than ever it had done before: ---This must be very affecting! Very afflicting, and grievous indeed!

And this, I presume, is remarkably the Case, as to the Occasion of our *present Mourning*. For if what I have heard at a Distance be true, *the Fields* in this Neighbourhood do manifestly appear to be *white to the Harvest* ^t.

Is it not well known to many among you, that *the Lord* is causing *Light* to *spring up* in some Places not far from hence, which in Years past have been as the *Habitation of Darknes*; and is beginning to enlighten those, who *sat in the very Region and Shadow of Death* ^u? Have there not been some evident Signs and Tokens, as if *the Spirit of the Lord* was about to *lift up a Standard against the Enemy*, where he had long prevailed, and carried all before him *like a Flood* ^w? Are there not some hopeful Appearances, that the

Time

^t John iv. 35.

^u Mat. iv. 16.

^w Isa. lix. 19.

Time is come, for its being made known to many, who perhaps had never heard it before, that Christ is given for a Covenant of the People, for a Light of the Gentiles, to open the blind Eyes, to bring out the Prisoners from the Prison, and them that sit in Darkness out of the Prison House * ?

Through the Report of the Gospel, that has been lately carried into obscure Parts of the adjacent Country, have not some been instructed in the Way of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and his imputed Righteousness ?---Are there not some here present, that within a few Months past were in the miserable State of Ignorance, Unbelief, and Sin ; that seemed to be swallowed up in the Gulf of Stupidity and carnal Security ; who are now so far rescued, as to be wounded and pricked in their Heart ; and being made to cry out, *What must we do to be saved* ? are enquiring after Christ, the great Physician of Souls, and after the healing Balm and mollifying Ointment of God's providing ?---Yea, are there not in this Assembly several, who but a little while ago were among the Generation of Scoffers, profaning the Name of Christ, reproaching his Ministers, vilifying his People, and despising his Ways ; that are now tracing the Footsteps of his Flock ^z, asking the Way to the heavenly Zion, with their Faces, and their Hearts set thitherward ^a ?

And is this in Truth the present State of Things, among you, or near you ? Happy sure, that it is so ! Let the Greatness of the Love of God be humbly adored ! and the Wonders of his saving Grace be for ever magnified !---But yet, the very Concurrence of these delightful Events is a great Increase of the Loss we are now lamenting. For these merciful Dispensations shew, what an abundant Occasion there is for spiritual Guides, for faithful Shepherds, and careful Watchmen. And it must upon many Accounts be very melancholy to think, that the Number of able
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* Isa. xlii. 6, 7.

^z Acts ii. 37.

^a Cant. i. 8.

^a Jer. l. 5.

and diligent Hands should be lessened, *at a Time*, when *Opportunities* for Labour and Service were *increasing*. In human Judgment, how ill at such a Season could *they* be spared, who were as *Scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven*, well versed in the Things of the Gospel, and abundantly qualified to *bring out of their Treasure Things new and old* ^b?

If the *Lord* does not graciously and powerfully appear for his own Cause, what a Damp must we fear it will be upon the *Work* in some neighbouring *Parts*, that he who was signally owned of *God* to be a great, if not the chief *Instrument* in beginning and carrying it on, should so soon be removed, and taken from it?—*This* is our *Affliction*! Here is the Cause of our *Grief*! It is so to *all of us*: To *those especially*, that are immediately concerned; who live in *dry and thirsty Deserts*, and could not but despair of ever seeing the *pure Streams* of Gospel-Ordinances pass gliding by their *Doors* again, in the like plentiful and refreshing Manner that they lately did, were they not taught, both from the *Word*, and their own *Experience*, that *with the Lord all Things are possible* ^c; and that there is not any Thing needful for his *People's Salvation*, which can be *too hard* for Him to effect.

Another *Circumstance*, which *exaggerates* the *Death of Ministers*, is,

3. When, according to the Course of Nature, a longer Continuance of their *Life*, and *Labours*, might have been expected.

By the righteous *Appointment* of *God*, from *Adam's Fall* till *Christ's second Coming*, *all must die* ^d. Neither the advanced *Piety*, nor the extensive *Usefulness* of any, can exempt them from the Stroke of *Death*. *Ministers* under the *Gospel* are no more suffered to continue by Reason of *Death*, than the *Priests* were under

^b Mat. xiii. 52.

^c Mat. xix. 26.

^d Heb. ix. 27.

under the *Law*^e. That *Ministers* therefore, that the most *eminent* and *excellent* of them, *should die*, is not at all to be *wondered at*. But that which sometimes gives the *Surprize*, and does more than a little *beighen the Affliction*, is their being *removed* at a *Time*, when *their Death* was *little expected*, and when there were *pleasing Hopes* of a *longer Enjoyment* of their *Ministry*.

This is a *Particular*, that cannot be overlooked with regard to the *Decease* of your honoured *Pastor*; there being to the *very Day* before the *Morning of his Dissolution*, a delightful *Prospect* of his *further Usefulness*. But how *suddenly* was he seized!---As to *himself* indeed, we have the greatest *Reason* to believe, that *he* was *prepared* and *ready* to obey the *Summons*. With an holy *Resignation* of *Soul*, like *Moses*, he could *die at the Commandment of his Lord*^f; without any *Trouble* at the *Thought* of his *being abroad*, at a *Distance* from his *Family*, and many of his *Friends*. To a *Good Man*, to a *faithful Minister*, taken in his *Master's Work*, as he was, *these Circumstances* could give *little*, or *no Uneasiness*. All *Concern* about them, we may well imagine, was *swallowed up* in the *Blessedness*, that attended his being found *so well employed at his Lord's Coming*^g. To him, no doubt, *sudden Death* was *sudden Glory*.---But as to *us* that survive, *how afflictive* is the *Providence*! When he left his *Habitation*, little did his *Relatives* think, whatever he thought *himself*, that the affectionate and tender *Respects* he then testified, would be *the last* he should ever shew them; and that instead of *returning to his House* again, his *Soul* should be ordered to *quit its fleshy Prison*, and take its *willing Flight* into the *happy Region* and *Mansions* above; where his *Conversation*, where his *Heart*, where his *Hopes* and *Desires*, it was abundantly evident, long before had been. Thus *they of his Family*, and *you of this Congregation*, had all your *last Sight of him*, at a *Time* when it was *little suspected*. For as to his *Years*, they could not forbid

† Heb. vii. 23.

f Deut. xxxiv. 5.

g Mat. xxiv. 46.

forbid the Hope, that *his valuable Life* might have been *continued* yet a good while longer : And if he was *worn out*, it must be with the *Abundance of his Service*, and what, in some Sense, might be called *the Excess of his Labours* ; and not by the *Extremity, or Length of his Age* ; he being but little more than turned of *Sixty-two*.

Now that one so eminently *useful and dear*, should be *snatched away* in such a *sudden and surprizing Manner*, must be *very affecting*. But that Providence should thus order it, *before his Days* were come to *the Years of GOD's ordinary Appointment* for the Life of Man, *this is a Circumstance*, that must certainly be an *Aggravation of your Loss*, and a considerable *Addition to your Grief and Sorrow*.

One *Consideration* more, which farther *exaggerates* the Case, is,

4. When *Gospel-Ministers* are *scarce, and rare to be met with*.

This, I confess, is a Remark, that ought to be applied with the utmost *Guard and Caution* ; and should never be introduced, whether in *Preaching, or Conversation*, but in a *serious Manner*, and in the *Fear of GOD*. It becomes us to be of the *like Spirit* with *Moses*, when he said, *Would GOD, that all the Lord's People were Prophets !* And in *that Spirit* we cannot but say, *Would to GOD, that all who are called his Prophets, were faithful, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them*^h !

But with an *holy Concern and Grief* be it spoken, the Case at present is *far otherwise*. It is too notorious to be once denied or questioned, that among *all Denominations* there are *many*, who bear the *Ministerial Character*, that have sadly *degenerated* from their *pious Predecessors*, and shamefully deserted their illustrious *Example*.—Are there not some, that are an open
Scandal

Scandal to their Function? who, like *Hophni* and *Phinehas* of old, by their *Wickedness* make the *Sacrifices of the Lord* to be *abhorred*ⁱ?—But are there not, besides these, many that *abuse their Office*, while they profess to *fulfill it*; and that *dishonour the Ordinance of Preaching*, while they engage in its Administration? How frequently is this done, by Men's *corrupting the Word of Christ*, while they would be thought to explain and teach it?

How few are the *Ministers* in these Times, who make it appear, that they aim to deal *faithfully* and *plainly* with the Consciences of Men; by acquainting them with the *Sinfulness* and *Misery* of their *natural Condition*; by setting before them the *Transgressions* of their *Lives*, and the *Evil of their Doings*; or by warning them of the eternal *Wrath* and infinite *Terrors*, that are coming apace upon the *Children of Disobedience*?—How few, that are *skilful* and *faithful*, in *preaching Peace* by *Jesus Christ*; in declaring the *Perfection*, the *Divine Appointment*, and *Glory of his Righteousness*, with the *Freeness* of its *Imputation* to all that have *Faith* to plead it; or in shewing, that it is for the *Sake of his Righteousness alone*, that God grants the *Remission of Sins*, and *justifies the Ungodly*^k?—How few, that are *careful* to point out, from the *Word of God*, the *original Spring of Regeneration*, as it flows from *electing Love*; the *Nature of it*, as it is a *Divine* and *Supernatural Work* upon the *Soul*; or the *Author of it*, as it is wrought by the *Spirit of GOD*? How few, that rightly declare the *Effects* of it, as it makes *old Things pass away*, and *all Things become new*^l? or that urge the *Necessity* of it, and shew, that without the happy *Experience* thereof never any can be *saved*^m?

How many are the *Preachers* in this Day, who instead of declaring such *important Truths* as these, amuse the *People* with empty *Speculations*, and entertain them

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ⁱ 1 Sam. ii. 17.
^m John iii. 3.

^k Rom. iv. 5.

^l 2 Cor. v. 17.

them with Discourses, either upon *Politicks*, and Matters of *Civil Government*, or upon *Controversy* and Matters of *doubtful Disputation*? And who, instead of insisting upon those *Graces* and *Duties* which essentially belong to the *Christian Life*, and a close *Walking with GOD*, satisfy themselves, and endeavour to content their Hearers, with slight *Harangues* upon *moral Virtues*, and the bare *Externals of Religion*, to the manifest Decay and Ruin of the *Power of Godliness*?

Now at a Time when *this* is too generally the Case among us, what a plain Call have we to lament the Death of such Ministers, as were truly Men of GOD? of such, as were ready and mighty in the Scripturesⁿ; whose Care it was, to preach the Word of Faith^o purely and entirely, as the Scriptures have revealed it; and who made it their Aim, both in the Pulpit, and out of it, to humble and abase the Creature, to exalt the Lord, his Righteousness and Grace, and to promote a Life of Faith, Dependence, and Submission, in all holy Walking and new Obedience?

In these Times of *Lukewarmness* and *Deadness*, such as are kept waking and lively, cannot but lament the Death of those godly Ministers, who spoke like Men, that had their Call, their Commission, and Power from God; whose Seriousness and Fervour in Praying and Preaching appeared to be the Effect at least of an holy Solitude about their own and others Salvation, and discovered the sweet Savour they had of the Things of GOD in their own Souls, and their Desire that the People also might be led into the happy and saving Experience of them.—In these Times of Error and Declension, Believers cannot but lament the Death of those Ministers, who were sound in the Faith, and holy in their Walk; whose Doctrine and Conversation were both of a Piece; and whose exemplary Behaviour, in a strict Obedience to all Divine Commands, and in a conscientious Regard to all Divine Appointments,

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gave Weight to the Truths which they delivered in publick, and was a powerful Recommendation of the Advice, Counsel, and Direction, which they gave in private.

And now, do you, my Brethren and Friends, you who have any just Apprehension of the *melancholy State of Things* almost throughout the Land ; you, who are well acquainted with the *peculiar Circumstances* in this Neighbourhood ; you, who knew more fully than others, the gracious, the excelling *Endowments*, and shining *Conversation*, of that *eminent Servant of the Lord*, whose *Funeral Rites* you have lately solemnized ; do you of this Congregation, that so long enjoyed the *Benefit* of his judicious, evangelical, warming, and searching *Ministry*, and the *Benefit* also of his laborious, pious, and instructive *Life*, do you judge, whether by his *Death* the Lord be not calling you, and us, to *Mourning*.—Do not the many *sad Countenances*, and *weeping Eyes*, which I now behold in this Assembly, sufficiently declare your *Apprehension* ? and are not these *dejected Looks* plain Indications of *grieving Hearts* ?—Mourn then, and give some *Vent* to the Fulness of your *Sorrow*.—But watch, that your *Passions* may be under an *holy Government*, and may be kept *within due Bounds* ; lest the *Enemy* get an *Advantage* of you, for you are not ignorant of his *Devices* ^P.

This brings me to the *APPLICATION*: And now, through Divine Assistance,

III. I shall attempt to turn the *Tide of your Sorrow* into its *proper Channel*.

Here then I would beseech you, and may the Lord enable you ! to make it appear in all your *Mourning*, that your *Grief* is of the *right Kind*, and that you *sorrow after a godly Sort* ^Q. To this End I shall offer you, (*first*,) Some *Cautions*, that your *Sorrow*

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^P 2 Cor. ii. 11.

^Q 2 Cor. vii. 11.

row may be *well regulated*; and (*secondly*,) Some *Directions*, that it may be *duly improved*,

FIRST, I shall offer you some *Cautions*, that your *Sorrow* may be *well regulated*. And here,

1. Do not *mourn*, as if *the Case* could not have been *worse*, than *now* it is,

Tho' the *Stroke* be *heavy*, and the *Dispensation* *severe*, still in the *midst* of *Judgment* *GOD* remembers *Mercy* ^r.---As yet, you are but under the *Appearance* of a *Threatening*, that the *Gospel* shall be *removed*; and by a faithful *Attention* to the *Warning* such a dreadful *Proceeding* may be *prevented*.

Again, *Sore* as the *Stroke* is *now*, yet had it come *sooner*, it might have been *worse*. Must not such among you say so especially, who have been *lately quickened* and *renewed*, through the *Blessing* of the *Lord* upon the *Labours* of *his Servant*, in some of the *last Years*, or even the *last Months* of his *Ministry*? How deeply soever then *your Loss* is *now* to be *lamented*, yet there is *Reason* to be *thankful*, that he was *continued* *so long*. It gave me some *Pleasure*, since I came into this *City*, to hear of one in particular, whose *Repentance* is of a *late Date*, who upon the present *Death* expressed himself to this *Purpose*, "He blessed *God*, that *his Servant* was *spared*, till " he had *done his Business* for him;" *i. e.* till he had been the *Instrument* of *his Conversion*. I hope there are many, whose *Hearts* upon the same *Occasion* can speak the same *Language*.

Consider farther, Would not *the Case* have been *worse*, had the *Lord* merely lengthened out the *Life* of *your Minister*, but laid him under an *Incapacity* of any farther *publick Usefulness* or *Service*; and thus have made him a *Spectacle* unto the *World*, unto *Angels* and *Men* ^s? This, in the adorable *Sovereignty* of *GOD*,

^r Hab. iii. 2.

^s 1 Cor. iv. 9.

GOD, has been the *Condition of some*, of great Eminence and Note in the *Ministry*.

And as to *you*, that have sat under *his* *awakening Ministrations*, whether for a *longer*, or a *shorter Space*, and have *never yet been converted*, you, *Sirs*, would do well to consider, that *the Case with you* might have been *worse*, infinitely *worse*, than yet *it is*. Let me seriously ask the Man that still remains in a State of *Impenitence* and *Unbelief*, Suppose *Death* had been *thy Lot*, and *thou*, poor Wretch, hadst been *cut off*, instead of *him that is gone*, hadst not *thou* been *undone for ever*? As to *him*, you are verily persuaded, *he is safe* and *happy* in the Mansions of Glory above: But hadst *thou* been taken in the *sudden* and *surprizing Manner* that *he* was, *whither* hadst *thou* gone? Or shouldst *thou now*, or at any Time whatever, be *cut off* in thy present *lost* and *undone Condition*, with thy Sin and Guilt upon thee, what then would *become of thy Soul* for ever? Must thou not be as *miserable*, as the Wrath of GOD, as the Lashes of Conscience, and the Torments of *Hell* itself, can make thee? Think then how *intolerable* the *Case* might have been, or must shortly be, *with thee*, unless thou art speedily delivered from the Hardness of thy Heart, and saved from thy Sins. *Happy* will it be, if the *turning thine Eye* into the *Grave* of the *Deceased* might have as desirable an Effect upon *thy Soul*, as was wrought upon *the Body* of the *Man*, who being *cast into the Sepulchre* of the *Prophet*, upon *touching his Bones*, received *Life*! Happy indeed, if through the Wonders of Divine Grace *the Preacher's Death* should be the Means of *awakening those*, whom the most *rouzing Sermons*, and the most *lively Preaching* never did! This would turn our *Mourning* into *Praising*; at least *thus* our *Tears of Sorrow* would be mixed with *Tears of Joy*.

2. Do not mourn, as if GOD was at a *Loss*, how *his Work* shall now be carried on among you.

Through

Through our Weakness and Ignorance *We* are soon puzzled ; but no *Perplexity* can possibly arise to *Him*, whose *Power* is omnipotent, and his *Wisdom* unsearchable. Keep you *the Path of Duty*. If you have offended or wandered, yet now return ^u. Trust in the Lord under all Events, and He will save you ^w. He is not tied to *Instruments* or *Means*, tho' We are. The *Fulness* and *Glory* of the *Head of the Church* are the same ; the *Stability* of the everlasting, of the All-comprehending *Covenant*, is the same as ever. The *Death of Ministers* makes no *Variation* in the eternal *Truths* of the *Gospel*, which they have published. The Lord can revive, and carry on his *Work*, in the Land, in the Churches, and in particular Souls, by whom he will. He that appoints the glorious *Angels* of Heaven to be *ministring Spirits* ^x to such *Worms* as we are, He can raise up the *meanest Worms* among us, when he pleases, to be the *Angels of the Churches*.

The *Work of the Gospel* was never carried on, by the strongest *Might* or *Power* of the *Creature*, without the *Spirit* ; and when He is poured forth, by weak Things He can confound the *Mighty*, and by foolish Things confound the *Wisdom* of all that are his or your *Adversaries* ^y. He can make *Darkness* *Light* before you, and crooked Things straight ; that He may bring the *Blind* by a *Way* they knew not, and may lead them in *Paths* that they have not known ^z. May such Things as these be done for you ! and thus shall you find, that the Lord will not forsake you. Take heed not to provoke Him thereunto by *Mourning*, tho' under a sensible *Conviction* that all *Flesh is Grass*, as if you were not assured, that the *Word of the Lord endureth for ever* ^a.

3. Let none that believe mourn, as if they were never to see their departed Minister in another World,

^u Jer. iii. 1, 22. ^w Psal. xxxvii. 3, 40. ^x Heb. i. 14.
^y 1 Cor. i. 27. ^z Isai. xlii. 16. ^a 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

World, because they *shall see his Face no more* in this.

It is true, the Thought of *seeing him again*, instead of *alleviating*, may justly add to the Sorrow of those, who under the most *pungent Discourses* continued *easy* and *secure* in the Practice of *Sin*; who under the most *melting Preaching* have been the *more hardened* in their *Impenitence* and *Unbelief*. It is dreadful sure, for Persons through their wilful *Obstinacy*, and chosen *Perverseness*, to be *preached into Hell* under a *Ministry*, that had the greatest Aptitude of leading to *Heaven*. And who is there among us, that is convinced of the *Corruption of his Nature*, and of the Deceitfulness and Power of *indwelling Sin*, but must acknowledge, that *this wretched Case* might have been *his*, if *Grace* had not *prevented*? But as to you that *continue in your Sin*, I might now justly say, *What have you to do with Peace*^b? but rather let me ask, “*What have you upon*” “*this Occasion to do with Mourning*? You slighted” “*the Instruction, Advice, and Counsel, which in*” “*the deep Penetration of his enlightened Judg-*” “*ment, which in the Tenderness of his Conscience,*” “*and in the Compassion and Fervour of his Spirit,*” “*your Minister gave you while he lived*; and now” “*you would be thought to mourn at his Death.*” But I must tell you, if you will not *receive the Lord's Christ*, nor *break off your Sins by Repentance*, that in a little Time it will be seen, that your *Attendance upon his Ministry*, and your *Mourning at his Death*, were both alike; and that neither of them was any Thing better than empty *Formality*, or vile *Hypocrisy*: And if you should *die in the sinful State* in which you now are, then will *he* for whose *Death* you profess to *mourn*, appear at the Bar of God as a *Witness against you*, to your utter Confusion and Condemnation.

But whoever shall be found *at the last Day*, to have truly profited by the Word which he preached, they shall
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see his Face with Comfort. You that have been formerly, or lately, set as *Seals to his Ministry*, tho' it may be supposed, that you of all others had the most endeared *Affection for him*, and are now the *most afflicted*, yet have no Need to mourn, as if the *present Separation* must be *perpetual and eternal*. No! At the End of the World, when *Christ shall appear* in his most *exalted State*, then all that are found in Him, both *Ministers and People*, shall meet in his glorious Presence. Then will the *Redeemer*, as an Evidence of his Faithfulness to his Covenant Engagements, and as a Demonstration of the Success of his Undertaking, *deliver up the Kingdom to GOD**, even all his *Subjects*, saying, *Father, Here am I, and the Children whom thou hast given me†*. At the same Time He will say to his *Ministers*, concerning those, that were converted under their respective *Ministry*, "Here are
 " *they*, who according to the eternal Designation of
 " *my Father*, being purchased by *my Blood*, were
 " through the Power of *my Intercession*, and the Efficacy of *my Spirit*, made the blessed *Fruits of*
 " *your Labours*. These I appoint to be *your Joy and*
 " *Crown of Rejoicing* to all Eternity."—Happy the Souls among you, whose *Faith*, in the midst of their *present Distress and Mourning*, can thus *anticipate the Felicity* of that *Heavenly State*; in which, I am persuaded, *Ministers* shall as clearly and distinctly know *their People*, and the *People their Ministers*, as the *Disciples knew Moses and Elias* at the *Transfiguration*^d!—But now,

SECONDLY, I shall offer some *Directions*, that your *Sorrow* may be *duly improved*, to the most spiritual and holy Purposes.

Let every Thing then that calls for Mourning, be seriously considered, and regarded with a *due Attention*.—Tho' perhaps of all outward Afflictions the *Apostle's Departure*

* 1 Cor. xv. 24.

† Heb. ii. 13.

ε 1 Thess. ii. 19.

^d Mat. xvii. 4.

Departure was reckoned by the *Christians* at *Miletus* to be the *forest*; and tho' this was the Case, which at that Time did most affect them; yet they had much Matter for Sorrow on other Accounts. And so have We.—Tho' the special Cause of our present Mourning be very great and solemn, yet it is not the only Occasion we have for Grief: No, nor the chief One neither. Besides what is Outward, with respect to the Afflictions of *Joseph*, and the Distress of our *Christian Brethren* abroad; besides the Decay of Religion, the Increase of Error, and the horrid Growth of Impiety at home; besides the melancholy Prospect we have, whether as to publick, or private Affairs: Besides all this, we have every one of us something within, which is such a standing Occasion for Grief and Sorrow, as will never be worn out, while Life itself shall last. The Consideration of our Vileness, of the Malignity and Evil which there is in Sin, gives us just Matter for fresh Lamentation from Day to Day. Sin is a deeper, and more abiding Cause of Sorrow, than the most grievous and affecting Loss can be, tho' of the dearest Fellow-Creature, or of the most faithful Friend to our Souls, either in a private, or publick Character.

By this Providence God has called you to Mourning, and disposed you for it. But what he now expects, and requires, under this awful Dispensation, is, that you be earnestly seeking His Spirit to enable you to renew afresh your Sorrow for Sin. Fall in then with the Design of this Stroke: And,

1. Mourn for Original Sin; for the Guiltiness and Corruption of our Nature.

Let your Faith look back to the very Entrance of Sin into the World, at the Fall of Adam; and lament our Original Apostacy through his Breach of the first Covenant; which was the Source, the Origin and Spring of this present Trouble, of all the Sorrows that we ever

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met with, yea, and of *all the Miseries* to which *his Posterity* are obnoxious, in Time, and to Eternity. We should *with Grief* remember what the *Apostle* teaches us, that *by one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned^f*: Sinned in Adam, being included in his Headship, as he was by the righteous Constitution of the infinitely wise and holy God appointed the federal Head, and Representative of all his Descendants: And thus by his Disobedience, not himself only, but many more, even all his Offspring, were made Sinners^g: And *We* among the rest. Let us *mourn* then, as the *Psalmist* did, from the Consideration, that we were *shapen in Iniquity, and conceived in Sin^h*; and for this Reason *were Children of Wrath by Nature, even as othersⁱ*. Again,

2. *Mourn for Actual Sins, both Inward, and Outward.*

Mourn under the Discovery of the Plague of your own Hearts^k, and the Experience of the Naughtiness that is within. Let us lament the Blindness of our Minds, the Obstinacy of our Wills, and the Inordinacy of our Affections. Let it grieve us to think, of the Treachery of our Memories, as to Matters of Duty and Religion, of the Unfaithfulness of our Conscience, and the Hardness of our Hearts against God. Let us mourn for secret Sins, which None but God and Conscience were privy to, and which cannot be charged upon us by any Fellow-Creature. Let us sigh for the Transgressions, Irregularities, and Defects of our Lives. Let the Hand of every Man of us in this Assembly, *smite upon his Thigh^l* for his Injustice or Intemperance, for his Remissness or sinful Conformity to the World, for his past Impenitence and Unbelief, for his Barrenness or Want of Growth under a plentiful Enjoy-

^f Rom. v. 12.

^g Rom. v. 19.

^h Psal. li. 5.

ⁱ Eph. ii. 3.

^k 1 Kings viii. 38.

^l Jer. xxxi. 19.

Enjoyment of the Means of Grace, and for *all those Evils* which there is Reason to fear have thus *provoked the Anger of the Lord*, and moved Him, by the *Death of your Minister*, afresh to threaten those *Judgments*, of which by his *Preaching* you had been often warned; even the *Departure of GOD's gracious Presence*, and, in Consequence of this, the *Loss* of that *Light, Power, and Glory*, which had heretofore been seen and felt in the *Sanctuary*^m.---Be persuaded, Sirs, (and may the *Spirit of Grace and Holiness* help you!) effectually to *search and try your Ways*ⁿ, to answer the Call of this Providence, by *confessing and bewailing your Offences*, by *turning again to the Lord*, and *walking more closely with Him*. Be roused, My dear Friends, be roused by *this awful Stroke*, to lament after *GOD*^o. Consider, if *He should depart*, tho' the *Gospel* itself should be continued, it will nothing avail. Remember there can be *no Judgment more dreadful*, than a *powerless, spiritless, unsuccessful Ministry*: Neither is there any *Destruction*, that can be *more certain or sore*, than what *this* directly leads to. *Seek the Lord* therefore, *while yet He may be found*^p; and *call upon Him*, before he is gone quite out of *Hearing*. Further,

3. *Mourn for the Sins of Others*; even for *those Sins*, in the *actual Commission* of which you had no hand.

Mourn for those Sins, that are found in your *Families*, in your *Neighbourhood*, in your *worshipping Assemblies*, or among your *religious Friends* and *Christian Brethren*. Consider, that as the *whole Camp of Israel* suffered for the *Trespas of Achan*^q; so a *Church* may suffer, if it be but for the *Sin of one of its Members*. And this justly: For where is the *Christian*, whose enlightened Conscience will not accuse him, of being some *Way accessory* to the *Sin* of his *Fellow-Members*, either through the *Want* of a greater

E 2 Earnest-

^m Psal. lxxiii. 2.
^p Isa. lv. 6.

ⁿ Lam. iii. 40.
^q Josh. vii. 13.

^o 1 Sam. vii. 2.

Earnestness in *Prayer* for their Preservation, or of more diligent *Endeavours* for their Sanctification ; or through some *bad Example*, or some sinful Connivance ; or through the *Neglect* of that faithful *Reproof*, and brotherly *Admonition*, which was his Duty ? Let these Things be enquired into, and then see, what *Occasion* you have upon these Accounts for *Mourning* and *Lamentation*.

I am indeed very much a *Stranger* to you, and the particular State of Things among you ; but by what I have learnt from the *Scriptures* of the *Imperfection* of the *best Saints* upon Earth, I cannot but fear, that upon a serious Reflection you will most, if not all, of you find some *Matter of Controversy* between God and your Souls, that has not yet been perfectly made up ; something, in which you have not so punctually and fully complied with the Instructions of the *Word*, and Dictates of the *Spirit*, as became you. Now the *Lord* has brought you into *Trouble*, with a gracious Design, I trust, that your *Ears* shall be opened ^r. By this Correction he is sealing his *Instructions* ^s, that they may have the greater Weight and Authority ; as *Deeds* and *Writings* have, when a *Seal* is affixed.---In this *Day of Adversity* therefore, you are to consider ^t, what your *Provocations* have been. And do not rest in a general Survey, but descend to *Particulars*, till you come close to the *Case*, that has been most insnaring, and polluting.---To find this out, let your *Life* be reviewed, and your *Heart* ransacked. Recollect what the *Miscarriage* was, which the *Spirit* of God did most charge upon you, before the *Stroke* came. Carefully attend to the Voice of *Conscience*, under, or after *Communion* with God in his *Ordinances* ; and when it is most disposed to deal impartially with you. Hear what it says, particularly, after the sweetest Enjoyment of God's Presence in *secret Prayer* and *Meditation*.---And when any *Evil* is detected, and its *Sinfulness* discovered,

^r Job xxxvi. 15.

^s Job xxxiii. 16.

^t Eccles. vii. 14.

covered, then let your *Sorrow* for it appear in your earnest Desire, Endeavour, and Prayer, that it may not be spared. Deal with it, as the *Jews* did with *Paul*, when they laid Hands on him, crying out, *Men of Israel, help: This is the Man that teacheth the People against the Law* ". Let this be your Sentiment and Language concerning *Sin* ; for that really deserves it. Cry to the *GOD of Israel*, and say, " *This is the Traitor, that has taught me to offend against thy Law; this the Evil, that has polluted all my holy Things; this the Provocation, that has incurred the Forfeiture of every Blessing, and deprived me of the Privilege of that excellent Ministry which I lately enjoyed.*" Yea, let it cut you to the Heart, to think, that by your *Sins* an holy and merciful God has been offended, the Name of *Christ* dishonoured, and the very *Spirit of Grace* himself resisted, affronted, and grieved. — And when your Attention is raised to such Considerations as these, then judge, whether your *Carriage towards GOD* be not a louder Call for Weeping, than any of his Providential Dispensations towards you.

And now perhaps some that are *true Penitents* may afflict themselves, because they think they have shed more Tears upon the present Occasion, than ever they did, at least in the same Space, under the Views they have had of the *Evil of Sin*. Hence the Devil, and their own Unbelief, are ready to hurry them into Fears, that their *Sorrow for Sin* was not an holy Contrition. — But let such know for their Relief and Comfort, that the Suddenness and Surprise of the present Stroke, their being wholly at a Loss also to know when, or how, this Grievance will be redress'd, are such Circumstances as render the Case very striking: Whereas the Discovery of the *Evil of Sin* was gradual; or perhaps their Distress for that no sooner arose, but through a believing Sight of the Righteousness of *Christ*, Relief was presently granted; and immediately upon their

their *Feeling their Wound*, an effectual *Remedy* was applied. Thus their *Eyes* were quickly dried, or their *Weeping* turned into *Tears of Joy*.—Besides, since *Contraries illustrate one another*, it may be of Service, if the Reasoning in the *Parable of the Prodigal*, used in Defence of the *Father's extraordinary Joy*^w, should be transferred to the Case of a *Believer* with regard to his *extraordinary Sorrow*: He can say of his *Sin*, The Remembrance of it *is ever with him*. It produces in him a constant Humiliation.—Tho' no such *Floods of Tears* therefore be continually gushing upon the *Account of Sin*, as flow from your *Eyes* upon the present, or may break forth upon some other surprising Event; nevertheless your *Sorrow for Sin* may be very sincere, and really lie the deepest. And without doubt, this is the Case, where *Mourning for Sin* is a daily Exercise.

But now, to draw to a *CONCLUSION*,

I shall offer a few *Hints* for your *Support* and *Consolation*. And may the *Spirit of GOD* set them home by his *Divine Energy* and *Power*!

1. Consider, that tho' *Ministers die*, yet your *Redeemer liveth*.

Jesus Christ is the same *Yesterday, To-day, and for ever*^x. He is the chief *Shepherd* of his *Flock*^y; and in Him all *Fulness dwells*^z. If *Under-Shepherds* be at any Time *Instruments of Good*, it is He that makes them so. All their *Abilities* and *Capacities* are derived from Him. Their *Light* and *Knowledge*, their *Gifts* and *Graces*, their *Usefulness* and *Success*, all come from Him. It is according to his gracious *Appointment*, and sovereign *Blessing*, that they are of Service to us, and that we receive any *Benefit* by them,

^w Luke xv. 31.

^z Heb. xiii. 8.

^y 1 Pet. v. 4.

^z Col. i. 19.

them. *They can do nothing without Him^a*; but when *they* are any of them *laid aside* or *removed*, He can *carry on his Work*, if he please, *without them*. And tho' it may be hard for you *now* to believe it, yet be assured, that through his infinite Wisdom and Grace, He can *over-rule* the *present Loss*, both to your Advantage, and his own Glory; and in the Issue of Things give you Reason to acknowledge, that *out of the Eater came forth Meat, and out of the Strong came forth Sweetness^b*. He can *now*, more fully than ever, *convince* you of the *Evil* of your *Creature-Dependances*, and *humble* you for them; and then *pardon* you, and bring you to a more believing and steady *Reliance* upon his own *Power* and *Care*. He is now *trying your Faith*: May his *Intercession* secure it from *failing^c*, that it may be *found unto your Praise*, and his *Honour and Glory, at his Appearing^d!*

2. Consider, what *Promises of Support* under *Troubles at present*, and what *Promises of Deliverance* from them *at last*, your God has made you,

While *here* in this World, there will be a *Cross* for every *Day*. *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous*; but, says the Promise, *the Lord delivereth him out of them all^e*. The *Afflictions* of the Righteous are *many*; some *lighter*, and some *heavier*: The *lightest*, too heavy for them to bear in *their own Strength*; yet the *heaviest*, not intolerable when *the Lord shall help*. Now to every Believer belongs that other Promise of his, which says, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy GOD: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the Right Hand of my Righteousness^f*.—Christ is Surety for all his People. He stands *engaged*, that they shall bear their *Losses* and *Disappointments*, their *Burthens* and *Grievances* of every Kind, not in a *sinless*, but in

^a John xv. 5.

^b Judges xiv. 14.

^c Luke xxii. 32.

^d 1 Pet. i. 7.

^e Psal. xxxiv. 19.

^f Isa. xli. 10.

in an *acceptable* Manner. And, as *Mr. Rutherford* observes, “ rather than any *Default* as to this should “ happen, He will *carry them, and their Crosses* too.” And when the *Number* of their *Trials*, which ever lessens as fast as they come, is *fully accomplished*, then they shall enter into the *Heavenly Bliss*; which includes among its transporting *Felicities*, a perfect *Freedom*, and eternal *Rest*, from all *Trouble*.

Be patient therefore, *Brethren* ^g, building up yourselves on your most holy *Faith*; and praying in the *Holy Ghost*, keep yourselves in the *Love* of *GOD*, looking for the *Mercy* of our *Lord Jesus Christ* unto eternal *Life* ^h. Let the present, and every such *Instance* of *Mortality*, be viewed as a *Confirmation* of the *Word*, which assures us, that in a little *Time* we likewise must be called, one after another, to put off this our *Tabernacle* ⁱ. And when this *earthly House* shall be dissolved, the *Saints* shall at once be exonerated of every *Burthen* that was upon their *Minds*. Such as are now through *Grace* dead unto *Sin*, and alive unto *GOD* ^k, shall die in the *Lord* ^l. They shall enter into the *New Jerusalem*, where there shall be no more *Death*, neither *Sorrow*, nor *Crying*, neither shall there be any more *Grief* or *Pain*; for all these *Things* shall then be passed away ^m. Nay, in *Heaven*, there shall not be so much as the *Need* of any *Temple* ⁿ: All *Occasion* for *Gospel-Ministers*, and *Gospel-Ordinances*, will there be for ever excluded: The immediate *Enjoyment* of *God* and the *Lamb* will so exalt and perfect that *glorious State*, as to leave no possible *Room* for their *Help*, or *Service*.

3. Remember, that the *Residue* of the *Spirit* is with the *Lord* ^o.

This is a *Consideration*, which may afford *Believers* great *Relief* under all the surrounding *Difficulties*, which

^g Jam. v. 7.

^k Rom. vi. 11.

ⁿ Rev. xxi. 22.

^h Jude, ver. 20, 21.

ⁱ Rev. xiv. 13.

^o Mal. ii. 15.

^j 2 Pet. i. 14.

^m Rev. xxi. 4.

which attend *themselves*, or the *Church* of God. It contains an *Encouragement*, perfectly suited to a People *mourning* under the *heavy Loss*, which you now sustain. For you may hence be assured, that He who has *effectually called* you, is able to *fulfill all the good Pleasure of his Goodness, and the Work of Faith with Power* ^p. He can wonderfully bless *Means* that seem *less likely*, and make them more effectually subservient to your Good, than were *those* which you accounted *the most promising* : Or, if He please, He can supply you with *another Pastor*, who shall bear a very great *Likeness* to *him* that is *taken from you*.— But that you should presently have one *in all Respects* as valuable, is what I presume you cannot expect. According to the ordinary Method of Divine Dispen-
sations, it requires a *long Time* for *Ministers* to be *formed* to such Measures of *Knowledge, Capacity, and Experience*, as *he* had attained to. Yet you should not forget, what he was ever ready to acknowledge, that all his holy and happy *Endowments* were the *Fruits of the Spirit*. By the Grace of GOD, he was *what he was* ^q.

But fully to declare what an excellent Person Mr. COLE was, or to do that *Justice to his Memory*, which I am persuaded you all apprehend he highly deserved, is upon many Accounts a Province too hard for me to undertake. However, that neither you, nor my own Conscience, may accuse me of a *sinful Silence*, upon so *special a Call*, as the Providence of God now gives me to speak, I shall point at *some* of the bright *Evidences*, and admirable *Effects*, of the *Grace* which was *bestowed upon him*. And this, I trust, shall be done with an upright Concern, that hereby your *Praise and Thankfulness to the Lord* may be afresh excited as to what is past, and that your *Trust and Confidence in him* may be strengthened under your present necessitous and destitute State. For as I proceed, you are to carry the Thought with you,
 F and

and may you be enabled rightly to consider, that *the Spirit of GOD* can do as much for *another* whom He shall send you, as ever He did for *him*, or *any* of his *ministring Servants*, whether in later, or former Times.

And here, should an *Appeal* be made to *yourselves*, must you not all bear your *Testimony*, that the late *worthy Pastor of this Church* was a *burning and a shining Light* ? A Man of a very *gracious and heavenly Spirit*, *sound in the Faith*, and *stedfast in the Profession* of it : *Humbly*, yet *fervently*, *zealous* for the grand *Doctrines* of the Gospel, and the distinguishing *Truths* of Divine Revelation : In his *Ministry*, constantly *building upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*, ever keeping his Eye upon *Jesus Christ himself*, as the *chief Corner-stone* *. Thus the most necessary and essential *Qualifications* of a *Gospel-Minister* were very conspicuous in him.

Besides these, he was remarkable also for the great *Strength of his Mind*, the deep *Penetration of his Judgment*, and his large *Compass of Thought* ; for the *Clearness of his Expression*, and the *striking Manner of his Address*. Have not you, (I know, others at a Distance have) often admired his *happy Talent in Preaching* ? his coming close to the *Consciences* of his Hearers, entering into the *Secrets of their Hearts*, shewing them the *Chambers of Imagery* †, and the *vile Abominations* that were *within* ? Has not this been frequently done with a *Fulness* and *Exactness*, that made many of you really suspect, that he had been told the *Particulars of your Case*, before you heard him ? tho' afterwards you were convinced, that *no Information* had been given, but what he received from the *Light of the Word*, and his own *Conviction of the Deceitfulness and Power of indwelling Sin*. And when by setting before Men the *Spirituality*, *Perfection*, and *Terror of the Law*, he had *opened their Wounds*, under the *Influence and Blessing of the Lord*,

* John v. 35.

† Eph. ii. 20.

‡ Ezek. viii. 12.

Lord, he had a dextrous and successful Hand, in *pouring in* the refreshing Oil of the *Promises*, and in *applying* ministerially the sovereign *Balm of Gospel-Grace*.

Tho' he was far from an Affectation of shewing *his Scholarship*, yet he was thought by competent Judges, to be well skilled in the most useful Parts of *Learning*, and had stored up a large Fund of necessary *Knowledge*. Thus he was qualified to treat *difficult Subjects* with great Dexterity, Justness of Thought, and Propriety of Language; while his Discourse was enriched with the most agreeable *Epithets*, instructive *Similies*, and apt *Illustrations*.

He was much devoted to the Study of the *Bible*; and *liked not*, either to *preach*, or *hear Sermons*, (as he has sometimes said to me,) in which the *Truths* that were delivered, were not confirmed by just and pertinent *Quotations* from the *Word of GOD*. Through his familiar and intimate Acquaintance therewith, *his Language* both in *Praying*, and *Preaching*, was richly adorned with the *Phraseology* and *Emblems* of *Scripture*. And indeed no *Words* can be more suitable, no *Allusions* more proper, in which to speak of *Divine Things*, than those which are taken from the *sacred Pages*, and are there taught us by the *Holy Ghost*.

Such were *his Gifts*, that he could, beyond most, accommodate his *Preaching* to the *meanest Capacities*, and bring down the *lofty Things* of *Salvation* to the Apprehension of *Babes in Christ*: While at the same Time, he could discourse of the *great Things* of *God*, in a Way that was engaging and *edifying* to those of *high Attainments* in *Grace*, and *fine Accomplishments* in *Human Learning*.

As to *his Diligence* in his *Master's Service*, this was very evident to you all. He was never backward to appear in your *publick Assemblies*; nor did he grudge his Pains, tho' but among a few, in your *private Meetings*, which he attended *twice a Week* when at *home*, and was particularly careful so to order *his*

Journeys, as, if possible, to be always present at your Friday-Exercises. As he was stated in his Work in the House of GOD, so he was ready to preach from House to House^u at all proper Seasons; there repeating, inculcating, and explaining, the Things he had taught in publick. And at some of your private Meetings, with what earnest Sollicitude would he ask those that attended, as Christ did his Disciples, Have ye understood all these Things^w? attempting in a Catechetical Way to help them to take in, apply, and improve the Truths he delivered, to their saving Profit and Edification.

And besides his constant Labours among you that were his immediate Charge, he was ready to do good to all, as the Lord gave him Opportunity^x; and took much Pains with several in this City, who were first awakened under Mr. Whitefield's Preaching, endeavouring to carry on the Work by expounding to them the Way of GOD more perfectly^y.—And since a Door was opened in the last Years of his Life, he carried on Lectures every other Week in some obscure Parts in the Neighbouring Country; preaching at different Places, generally three, and often four Times in the Week, between the Sabbaths; and this to Assemblies, composed of several Hundred, and sometimes above a Thousand Hearers, of poor working People, who were not able so much as to defray the necessary Expences of his Journeys. But when some of a grateful Spirit, tho' incapable of helping, lamented his Difficulty, especially upon Account of the late uncommon Dearness of Pro-vender, he chearfully answered, “ He did not grudge his Charges; for he was willing, that all he had, and all he could do, should be employed in the Service of the Cause of Christ.” And when others, in the Tenderness of their Compassion, were observing to him, how fast through his excessive Labours his Strength must wear out; he replied, “ If the Knife
“ did

^u Acts v. 42. xx. 20.
^y Acts xviii. 26.

^w Mat. xiii. 51.

^x Gal. vi. 10.

“ did wear out in cutting, it answered the End it was made for.” So careful was he to watch against every Suggestion, that he thought looked like a Temptation to spare himself!

With respect to his daily Behaviour, and the general Course of his Walk, both at home, and abroad, he paid a strict Regard to the Apostle's Direction, of giving no Offence in any Thing, that the Ministry might not be blamed²; and was careful in a very high Degree, to be an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity³. And such he eminently was, in every Station, and Relation of Life.

In many Instances of his Conduct it appeared, that he was much raised above this World, and was willing to deny himself, that he might be faithful in honouring his Lord. Hence it was, that he generously (as some of yourselves have termed it,) refused to comply with several pressing Invitations to remove to larger and richer Congregations, both in London, and the Country too. For no worldly Advantage could ever tempt him to leave a People, among whom the Lord had graciously owned and blessed his Labours.—And a kind Providence having favoured him with a little earthly Possession, he was very cautious, that his Ministry might never be burthensome to any. Hence he would frequently take upon himself Expences, which his Friends have willingly offered to bear for him; and generally refused any Presents of Money for Sermons upon Funeral Occasions, especially from his Gloucester Friends, or where he did but suspect a Straitness of Circumstances in the Family. Nay, such was his Tendernefs, that when some of his Friends in London, who thought he came within the Design of the Will of the Testator, have sent him of their own Accord a Receipt to sign for a Share in some kind Donations left to poor Dissenting Ministers, he has constantly refused, lest he should hinder those that wanted.

After

² 2 Cor. vi. 3.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 12.

After all his Attainments in Grace and Knowledge, after all the Instances of his Usefulness and Success, he still continued to the last a *Pattern* of *Humility, Modesty, and Condescension*; conversing as freely with the *Meanest* for their Good, as if he had been but upon a *Level* with them; for he knew that *his Nature* was so with *theirs*. And out of his compassionate Regard to the *Souls of the Poor*, he made himself as *familiar* with them, as they could wish, or desire.

Thus he behaved under some *Difficulties*, under some *Trials* of *Patience* and *Courage*: For the *same Spirit* that breathed out *Hatred* and *Persecution* against the *Lord of the Harvest*, will shew its *Bitterness* and *Rage* against *his Servants*. Of this our honoured *Brother* had some Experience. He was often *threatened*, tho' without any *Provocation*, but that of an *Aim to do Good*, and be *found faithful*. But there is Reason to think, that the *same Spirit of GOD*, who had taught him to *believe*, had likewise prepared him to *suffer*. This appeared from an Instance of *his Carriage* not long since, when he was *affronted* and *abused* upon the Road. One Day after he had been *preaching* at *Avening*, a Place at which he had set up one of his *Fortnight-Lectures*, in his Return to *Stroud* he passed by *four Men* standing together. Some of them called him by his Name, and paid him the Compliment of asking him *how he did*; to which he returned a *respectful Answer*. However, as soon as his Back was towards them, they all followed him, and some of them began to *throw Stones* at him. At first *Mr. Cole* took no Notice of it: But a *Christian Friend*, that was walking by his Horse's Side, attempted to *check them*, by asking them *why they were so uncivil*. Yet they still continued *their Rudeness*, like Persons bent upon *Mischief*: And presently a *Stone* struck *Mr. Cole* between his Shoulders. Upon this he halted, and staid till the Men came up to him. Then with *Meekness* he said, "Gentlemen, what

" Hurt

“ Hurt have I done, that you *stone me* on the King’s
 “ High-Way? You see, I wait for you: If I have
 “ done you any Harm, stone me more.” To
 which one of them answered, “ No Harm, Sir.”
 Then, said *Mr. Cole*, “ All the Harm I wish you,
 “ is, that you may be *Partakers of Eternal Life*.”
 Upon this *Two* of the Company turned off, and the
other Two walked civilly by his Horse’s Side for some
 Time.

When certain *Sons of Belial* had threatened to throw
 him into the Water, at hearing of it he said, “ They
 “ might throw him in half a Dozen Times if they
 “ would, he did not care, if he might but be the In-
 “ strument of Good to their Souls.”—By these, and
 such like Passages, he discovered himself to be one
 of those faithful Ministers, who neither regard what
 Enemies they make themselves, nor what they may
 suffer, by their holy Diligence and Zeal in promoting
 the Interest of Christ, and the eternal Salvation of lost
 Sinners.

From this excellent Person, that carried it with
 so much Meekness towards his Enemies, what could
 be expected, but that he should behave with much
 Respect and Affection towards those, who being the
 Friends of God and Religion, had really a Friendship
 for him? This he did, and testified it, by his Read-
 ness to serve them, as Capacity and Opportunity would
 permit, even in their Temporal, but especially in their
 Spiritual Concerns. Herein he was ever willing to
 help them, by his Instructions and Prayers, by his
 Advice and Admonitions too. For it was noted of
 him, that he was watchful to reprove even his best
 Friends, either with Tenderness, or Sharpness, as the
 Case required; and would spare none through Favour
 or Affection, when it appeared, that they were not
 upright and regular in their Walk.

As he was often pressing others to be ready to every
 good Work^b, so he was careful to encourage them by
 his

his own *Example*. He was, in particular, much *given to Hospitality*^c; and would be very uneasy, if some of the *poor Christians*, who lived at a Distance from the *Sanctuary*, and took much Pains to come *under its Droppings*, did not *make free* with the *Provisions* of his *House* and *Table*, in the Intervals of publick Worship upon the *Lord's Day*. The kind Disposition, and discreet Management of his *religious* and *prudent Yoke-fellow*, rendered this Custom *easy to the Family*; while their joint Endeavours by *Spiritual Discourse* to help the *Pilgrims* forward in their Way, made the *Entertainment* doubly *useful* and *pleasant* to them.

From the heavenly Temper of his Mind there naturally arose a becoming *Sobriety* and *Gravity*, mixed with a well-regulated and agreeable *Cbearfulness* in all his Conversation. But he studiously *shunned* the *Places* and *Company*, in which it was not likely, that he should either *receive*, or *do any Good*. And as one at all Times desirous to give those he conversed with a *Lift towards Heaven*, he was known to *watch for Opportunities* of introducing something that related to *God* and *Christ*, and the great Concerns of *another World*. He would often *strike Fire*, and was pleased when it took, and became the Means of *kindling* a spiritual and holy Conversation; which made the *Hearts* of the Company *burn within them*^d, while the *Things* of the *everlasting Covenant*, and of *eternal Salvation*, were the delightful Subjects of their *Christian Discourse*.

Thus, through the *Grace of GOD* that was *bestowed upon him*, he *obtained a good Report* of the *Saints*, of the *Truth itself*^e; yea, and of *those that are without*^f: For in *their Eye* he was *as blameless*, as a Man perhaps could be, that *worshipped God*, as he did, in the *Way which they call Heresy*^g. And through his *Circumspection*, *Faithfulness*, and *Self-Denial*, his *Enemies*

^c 1 Tim. iii. 2.^d Luke xxiv. 32.^e 3 John, ver. 12.^f 1 Tim. iii. 7.^g Acts xxiv. 14.

mies could find no Error or Fault in him, except what they found against him concerning the Law of his GOD.^h

Such was this great and good Man, with whose *excellent Ministry* you have been highly favoured. And there are *renewed Souls* among you, (we trust, *not a Few*;) who will to *Eternity* have Reason to *praise GOD* for so great a Blessing. But now *he is removed*, you are *in Pain*; and while you look upon the *dark Side* of the Cloud, and judge merely by the *present Appearance*, you cannot be otherwise; to think, what is likely to become of the *Cause and Interest of Christ* among you. — Yet since *the Residue of the Spirit is with the Lordⁱ*, fear not with any distrustful Anxiety, or sinful Despondency; *only believe^k*, and you shall see the *Salvation of the Lord^l*. If it be *his good Pleasure*, He can quickly *raise up*, and send you an *Elisha*, who shall go forth *in the Spirit and Power of Elijah^m*, and with a *Portion of that Spirit*, doubleⁿ to what other *Ministers* in common receive: One, who in *Christ Jesus* shall beget many *through the Gospel^o*; that have never yet been *quickened*; who shall *feed you with Knowledge and Understanding^p*; who shall *lead this Flock* like a *Shepherd*, going before it *with a right Spirit*, and *in a right Way*; setting you *the like Pattern*, as you have already seen, of true *Christian Piety*, in the most *circumspect Behaviour*, and *universal Fidelity* to *God and Man*.

Such another *Blessing* I heartily wish, and beg of *the Lord* to give you; that you may further be shewn by a *living Example*, how you should behave *in the House of GOD*, and *in your own Houses*. Be much in *Prayer* for yourselves, that you may be directed, guided, and prospered, in seeking a *Successor*, of the like gracious Endowments, as was *the Deceased*. Remember the *good Advice* and *holy Cautions*, that upon

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^h Dan. vi. 4, 5.ⁱ Mal. ii. 15.^k Luke viii. 50.^l Exod. xiv. 13.^m Luke i. 17.ⁿ 2 Kings ii. 9.^o 1 Cor. iv. 15.^p Jer. iii. 15.

the like solemn Occasion were formerly given *to you*, or your *pious Fathers* *, to this Purpose : “ Go not a
 “ Step without God before you : Cherish mutual Love
 “ and Peace : Watch against all Divisions and Dissen-
 “ sions, against all Weakness and Rashness in your
 “ Proceedings. Let all your Works, and this in par-
 “ ticular, be managed with a humble, meek, de-
 “ pending, and faithful Spirit ; that you may be
 “ able now, and at the Judgment-Day, to appeal
 “ to your Redeemer, the Searcher of Hearts, that
 “ under this awful Event you did the best in your
 “ Power, to maintain his Honour and propagate
 “ his Interest in this City and Neighbourhood, and
 “ to repair this Tabernacle for him to dwell in.”

Plead the *Promises*, suited to your present destitute Condition. Remember, that when *Christ ascended*, he *received Gifts for Men* † ; and now it would be casting a vile *Reproach* upon his Name, *not to believe* the Certainty of the *Distribution*. So long as *the World shall stand*, there will be a *Church* upon Earth, in one Part of it, or another : *Sion* shall constantly find, that *instead of her Fathers, shall be her Children*. And if *You*, that are now the *Members of this Church* ; if *They* that hereafter shall be joined with you, or succeed you in that Relation ; shall *obtain Mercy to be found faithful* ‡ ; who can tell, but that your *Church-State* may be *preserved, established, and perpetuated*, as long as *Sun or Moon shall endure* §. Let the *Constancy* of your *Cries to the Lord*, let your *Importunity* and *Fervour* therein, evidence this to be in Truth *the Desire of your Souls*.

And when you are *enlarged*, and have the greatest Nearness of *Access to GOD in Prayer*, then forget not the sorrowful *Relict*, and mournful *Family*, which your *dear Pastor* has left behind. Let the christian and tender *Sympathy*, which *in your Troubles* you have often met with *from Him*, now be *returned, not to himself,*

* *Mr. Noble's Funeral Sermon on the Death of Mr. Forbes.*

† *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* ‡ *1 Cor. vii. 25.* § *Psal. lxxii. 7, 17.*

himself, (that cannot be, nor can he need it,) but to Those who were his Flesh and his Bone.—Intreat the Lord, that his disconsolate Handmaid may be supported, relieved, and comforted: That the eternal GOD may be her Refuge, and underneath her may be the everlasting Arms^t: That as she has hitherto been enabled through Grace to honour God by Well-doing, she may now, and to the last, be helped to glorify Him by quiet Submission and patient Enduring. Plead, that under the sensible Decays of her natural Strength, she may be refreshed with the sweetest Experience of an happy Increase and Growth in Grace; that she may to the End of Life be kept in the full Possession of her Soul^u, and be favoured with the repeated Intimations, and highest Assurance, of her Interest in eternal Love; that under all the Sorrows of her Widowhood, and solitary State, she may have this to comfort her, that her Maker is her Husband^w.—Plead for the Children, that the Lord would pour out his Spirit upon the Seed of his Servant, and his Blessing upon his Offspring^x: That they may all be excited, from a real Principle of Faith and Love, in the most open and solemn Manner, to avouch the GOD of their Fathers to be their GOD: That by their upright, humble, and holy Walking, that by their uniform, unshaken, and constant Zeal for the Redeemer's Glory, they may be an Honour to their deceased Parent, and a solid Comfort to her that survives: That the Son may be as a Plant grown up in his Youth^y, that he may be abundantly fitted, and mercifully spared, for great and lasting Service, in whatever Part of Christ's Vineyard his Labours shall be spent: And that the whole Family, under the Guidance and Protection of a Covenant-GOD, may be Followers of those, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises^z.

Yea, since the Residue of the Spirit is with the Lord^a, let this encourage your Supplications, that the Seed which

^t Deut. xxxiii. 27. ^u Luke xvi. 19. ^w Isa. liv. 5. ^x Isa. xlv. 3. ^y Psal. cxliv. 12. ^z Heb. vi. 12. ^a Mal. ii. 15.

which has been sown, and seems to lie dead under the Clods, may at length be made to spring up in the Hearts of many, and appear in the Fruit that shall be brought forth in their Life and Conversation.——Be importunate also, that the Lord would graciously send forth Labourers into the Harvest^b; that he would bless the Schools of the Prophets, cast Salt into the Fountains, and purify the Seminaries of Religion and Learning; that there may be in the Churches a Succession of godly and judicious, of experienced, able, and faithful Ministers, who shall come forth rightly spirited and richly anointed for so great an Office: That the Eyes of Zion may not fail to see her Teachers^c, tho' as to the Prophets and Fathers of whom Death has bereaved us, we shall see their Faces here no more.

FINALLY, When Pious Friends, and Godly Ministers, that have been the Helpers of our Faith and Joy^d, are thus taken away from our Head^e, and removed out of Sight; let these solemn Dispensations quicken us in our future Attendance upon all the Ministrations and Ordinances of the Gospel; to wait more diligently than ever for the promised Spirit, to give us those believing, those transforming, and refreshing Views of the King in his Beauty, and of the Land that is very far off^f, as shall be to Us assuring Tokens, that in a little Time we ourselves shall be also with the Lord, ever to behold, both Him, and Them, in Glory^g; and through the Gift of his Righteousness, and the Consummation of his Grace, being afore prepared for the transporting Bliss, shall join with the happy Myriads of Saints and Angels in their heavenly Hallelujahs, saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever^h. AMEN, and AMEN.

^b Mat. ix. 38.

Isa. xxx. 20.

^d 2 Cor. i. 24.

^e 2 Kings ii. 3.

Isa. xxxiii. 17.

^g John xvii. 24.

^h Rev. v. 13.